

Timmy Gleason - Episode 843

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SPEAKERS


James Geering, Timmy Gleason




James Geering 00:00

This episode is sponsored by NuCalm. And as many of you know, I only bring sponsors onto the show whose products I truly swear by. Now we are an overworked and underslept population, especially those of us that wear a uniform for a living, and trying to reclaim some of the lost rest and recovery is imperative. Now the application of this product is as simple as putting on headphones and asleep mask. As you listen to music on each of the programs there is neuro acoustic software Beneath that is tapping into the actual frequencies of your brain, whether to up regulate your nervous system, or downregulate. Now for most of us that come off shift we are a exhausted and B do not want to bring what we've had to see and do back home to our loved ones. So one powerful application is using the program power nap, a 20 minute session that will not only feel like you've had two hours of sleep, but also downregulate from a hyper vigilant state, back into the role of mother or father, husband or wife. Now there are so many other applications and benefits from the software. So I urge you to go and listen to episode 806 with CEO Jim Paul. Then download NuCalm and you see a LM from your app store and sign up for the seven day free trial. Not only will you have an understanding of the origin story and the four decades this science has spanned, but also see for yourself the incredible health impact of this life changing software. And you can find even more information on nucalm.com Welcome to the behind the shield podcast. As always, my name is James Geering. And this week, it is my absolute honor to welcome on the show, Miami firefighter and Task Force to member Timmy Gleason. Now Timmy is an immensely respected member of the Special Operations community when it comes to the world of firefighting. But unbeknownst to many, he has an incredibly powerful mental health story that he tells on this episode. As a young boy, he lost his home in a hurricane here in Florida, and ultimately joining Task Force to respond to multiple hurricanes during his career. So we discuss a host of topics from his journey into the fire service, responding to the Haitian earthquake, the Surfside claps, and hurricane Ian, his own powerful mental health story, overcoming addiction, post traumatic growth, firefighter fitness and so much more. Now, before we get to this incredibly powerful and important conversation, as I say, every week, please just take a moment, go to whichever app you listen to this on, subscribe to the show, leave feedback and leave a rating. Every single five star rating truly does elevate this podcast therefore making it easier for others to find because this is a free library of almost 850 episodes now. So all I ask in return is that you help share these incredible men and women's stories. So I can get them to every single person on planet earth who needs


to hear them. So that being said, I introduce to you Timmy Gleason enjoy what's me, I want to start by saying firstly, welcome to the behind the shield podcast there. Your name has come up numerous times what I love about so my closing questions, who else do you recommend to come on? And we are finally sitting down. So welcome to the show today.

 Timmy Gleason 03:56


Thank you. Thanks for having me. I'm actually pretty excited about where we're gonna go where we're gonna end up today.

 James Geering 04:05

Absolutely. So speaking of ending up where on planet earth we finding you Today

 Timmy Gleason 04:11

I am in in Miami, Florida. I live in a suburb of called Kendall, the Kendall area and it's way out west of in Dade County. And I work for the city of Miami fire department where I've been for the last 20 I believe 25. I'm coming up on 25 years now.

 James Geering 04:39

So I would like to start the very beginning because I know that still includes South Florida. So tell me where you were born and tell me a little about your family dynamic. what your parents did How many siblings?

 04:49

Okay, I was born in February of 1972 Groundhog Day which for those that know me will understand the the irony in that it's pretty funny. that I was born on Groundhog Day. But I was. I was actually born in Brooklyn, New York. And we moved my mom and I moved to Miami, Florida. When I was very young. I was about a year and a half old. We moved from Brooklyn, just my mom and I, down here to Miami. We lived for a short period of time on Miami Beach with my grandfather. And then my mom was able to get on her feet. And that is her own place. And that's kind of where life started was in the in the Kendall area and a little bit further south in the homestead area. I grew up in the homestead area, where I attended Junior High in high school and then

 05:54

and then moved back up to the to the Kindle area after Hurricane Andrew hit South Florida, my mom and I lost, lost our home and pretty much everything in it. So we moved back up to the to the Kendall area.

 James Geering 06:12

Was it homestead that you lived in during that hurricane? Yes. Because I remember when I look back, I mean that when we think of Andrew, I mean, obviously it kind of went up the state but homesteading, please correct me if I'm wrong was a lot of trailers as well. So there was a huge amount of devastation and loss of life in that particular area of South Florida.

 06:34

It was brutal. The devastation was, you know, at that time was pretty much the worst that anybody had ever seen. And as far as death go, there was a ton of a ton of people that stayed in their homes. And there was a very big migrant community that for either whether it be lack of education or whether it be you know, for whatever reason, a lot of them stayed and out, deepen, deepen homestead, there's the homestead Air Force Base, well around the homestead Air Force Base, there was a lot of low income housing work where migrants, you know, like a migrant community where they were there were live, buses would pick them up in the morning and take them to the field. So they could go to work well, they all stayed a lot of their state in their, in their homes. And out in that area. You know, the wind was clocked at, like 150 160 miles an hour at some points. And there was a lot of devastation and a lot of loss of life out in that area. They they don't believe that they ever came up with a true accurate number of how many people ended up, you know, dying because of that storm.

 James Geering 07:51

I think it was Andrew, if I'm not mistaken. It was a while ago, and I spoke to him. But there's a guy Johnny Mack, who's a firefighter north of you, I forget which department it was actually. But we sat down to an interview. He's actually one of the the top tier guys in the CrossFit organization as well. But he was a lineman originally. So hearing his story of them literally trying to connect power lines after that was crazy.

 08:15

Yeah, and it kind of became the wild west on there to you know, Law and Order was got pretty crazy. And people were obviously you know, people were, say what you want but people were trying to live man and you can't really judge somebody when you got little ones at home and you're trying to you're trying to feed them or you know, keep them keep them thriving and alive. So people were were stealing generators, they were stealing food they were stealing. You know, they were crawling up in people's yards and stealing stuff from their busted out homes. I mean, it was it was bad people were getting killed left and right on the street. It was a it was a rough, a rough go of it for a while and the fact that we had no power for so long, you know, just added insult to injury. I can't even imagine what it was like for those guys stringing lines afterwards, you know, that had to be had to be really tough. But even even, you know, ice delivery people had a tough they were getting robbed and bread delivery people were getting robbed and shot. It was it was it was a rough go. They ended up bringing into the bringing in the National Guard at some point.

 James Geering 09:27

Well, you've been some old deployments, and we'll get into that some of which were hurricanes. With this lens now that you have in 2023 What were the, you know, the shortcomings, the failings that were happening for that particular incident back

 09:43

then? I believe like anything else, I think it was back then we just didn't know what we didn't know. And I would like to think that, you know, a lot of the things we did was because we didn't know and I mean, I remember, you know, I was significantly younger then, but I remember them telling telling people Oh, you can, you know, tape a big X on your window with with duct tape or with packing tape and your glass will, you know, stay, it'll break, but it'll stay in place. Well, that's ridiculous. You know, I mean, when the wind is up over 100 miles an hour, there's nothing that's gonna save that glass. Except if it's impact glass, you know. And so I think it was just we didn't know, we didn't know. And I think that contributed to a lot of a lot of people getting hurt, a lot of a lot of property loss, you know. And it's funny, because the storms that I respond to now, I don't know that all of them are that much more powerful. But it seems like when I see the devastation now, looking at it, I don't know if it's because I'm looking at it through an older and older man's eyes, but the devastation now just seems so much greater, you know, so much more widespread. But I can tell you that whether it's a slower storm, that it's coming, and we're you know, we're being told that it's going to possibly affect our area, or whether it's a it's a storm that they're deploying me to, I have a very big, I don't want to say fear, but I would say very healthy respect for for storms as they come in now. You know, the, the overwhelming feeling of you may possibly lose your house and lose pictures and, and, you know, magazines and shit that you've had. Sorry,

 James Geering 11:39

I know, you're gonna swear, trust me. I'll say fuck, there we go. Now we're even. So there you go.

 11:44

So, you know, the thought that you may lose something that that you've had, since you're however old, you know, and you can't replace it to me and I was I'm an older man, it's just that it's almost petrifying that scary because losing everything like that is not not an easy, easy task. You know, if I can remember it being significantly hard, trying to get back all the stuff that we lost, and realizing over a period of time, oh, shit, I lost, we lost out in the storm. We don't have it anymore. You know. Now as I'm an older man, I can only imagine how hard that would be hard. That would be.

 James Geering 12:27

I was thinking the other day because we had I forget. I mean, I lose track of the the ones that are named that don't hit us, obviously, because there's so many. But being in the States for 20

years, most of which was in Florida, I was Orlando, then Hialeah, then out west for a few years and then back there this area for the last 15 It seems to me that because we like or we it's not us, they like to sensationalize so much in the media to the point where you know, you'll have the report or acting like they're in the middle of a storm and as a dude walking their dog behind the danger is that that that irresponsible reporting causes like a cry wolf situation. And therefore when there is a true genuine one absolutely bearing down on us. We're so kind of, you know, overwhelmed by all the other kind of hype stories that people aren't able to really discern which is the one we should be taken seriously.



13:23

Yeah, I gotta, I gotta totally agree with you. And even you know, if you even you could look at the one of the most recent storms for Myers Beach. As that was coming towards us, here in Florida, they kind of downplayed it. I remember, I remember hearing that, yeah, it's gonna make landfall as, as you know, a one or two or possibly a three, but it's not gonna get any higher than that. And I think that kind of lulled people into this false state of of security because when we got to Fort Myers Beach, I mean, we got there, within hours of the storm passing through. We came kind of riding behind it. And man that the stories that we heard of people riding out the storm organ or getting getting sucked out of their house and then them going one way and their wife or husband going the other way and not in them not seeing them ever again. The stories like that, that we were being confronted with left and right. Was Was David Nicholas, we were walking up to people and they were just constantly telling us the stories you know, and we would ask them almost dumbfounded like why why would you stay you're you live right on the beach. You know what why would you stay Why would you? Why would you choose to do that? And they all said the same. anything out, we just really didn't think it would be that bad or, or they would tell us, we left during the last one, and it turned out to not be that bad. But what happened was our police got looted and, you know, so. So we ended up losing stuff, not because of the storm because it got stolen. So we decided that we weren't going to leave this time. And it ultimately, for some of them, it ultimately caused them, you know, to lose loved ones or to lose their loved ones to lose them. And it was it was pretty. It was a it was a rough experience here in some of those stories. I mean, it was it was crazy. You know, we were hearing stories of people writing their roofs down you know, as the storm surge was coming in, they were sitting atop their roof and their their house was floating on the street and they were stuck on the roof screaming for help as the tide was taking them out to see you know, another story we heard was a young lady with her mom and her dad but you know, the screen those the sliding glass door busted, water rushed in and from the time it got from the floor to the ceiling, it was you know, about six minutes they were sucked out the front door and ended up watching the storm in their front yard. Wrapped in pool noodles on the styrofoam pool noodles holding on to the the roof ridge of their house watching the whole storm. Pass them by and the they've you know, they rode the storm out in their front yard in the water. And she said it was like something like the Wizard of Oz she said it you know, things were flying past microbursts were happening lightning was crashing. And she couldn't believe that she was she was actually visualizing this stuff, you know? So it's it to me, it's I think it's it goes back to some of that what you were saying it's we hear it or, or or get told them we either think it's not going to be that bad. Or we see the guy you know, in the media with you standing out in the street with no shirt on and just shore told an American flag and the winds blowing the flag and the winds blowing his hair. And he's you know, like, like rocking on, you know? And so we see that and we go Oh, this isn't this isn't going to be bad at all? Well, it turns out that it's that it's significantly worse, you know.

 James Geering 17:33

So right before that storm here, I was interviewing Larry Doyle. And I remember for a couple of reasons. Firstly, Ian followed right after that. Secondly, my dog actually died. during that interview the colonel called me I when I was done with the interview, I got the messages and heartbroken me but I was on Sanibel Island with Larry. And he's very, very revered journalists. He interviewed Nelson Mandela when he first got out. That's kind of the level of respect journalism had while we're on this topic. And so he evacuate with his wife. And then I went down before the storm still and visited one of my friends who's not informed me as my as beach but as one of the neighboring fire departments visited him and then I went back, Larry's house was you know, destroyed robbing the surrounding surrounding areas. You know, you see the footage of the Fort Myers station that's in what like five feet of water, the engines flooded that pulling all the stuff out the compartments. But after the fact, it really felt like for anyone who wasn't geographically in that area, like you said, even even after it hit that it wasn't as big of a deal, as it actually was. Now, Rob Ramirez on the show, he gave an amazing account of what he witnessed with his crew when they first got there. Talk to me about the actual impact.

 18:50

Actually, Rob and I, Rob and I were partners on the action again, and I forgot in all the getting ready for the show. He told me to tell you Hi. And you know, that he had a great time when he was on the show. But he was actually him and I were actually what they call rescue team managers for the for the Urban Search and Rescue Team Florida Task Force to we we were counterparts basically, we were the ones in charge of formulating any type of rescue plan formulating, you know how we were going to get people out of the rubble if there was anybody in there. And, you know, we we were responsible for basically being charged with the whole rescue component of the, of the Taskforce.

 James Geering 19:39

So he gave you know, his portrayal, but then, you know, told some of the stories of just the the immense work that your initial team had to do because everyone else has been kind of held back by the hurricanes path. So kind of walk me through that day through your eyes.

 19:54

So our the city of Miami is the sponsoring II Agency for, for the task force. So it kind of falls into the hands of our, our fire department administration that kind of run the team. And they're the ones who interface the most with with FEMA. So we, they were getting reports, you know that that area was was really taken a beating. And that storm surge had really come in to the west coast and affected it greatly. And we were getting original reports we were getting was the Marco Island. People were trapped on the roofs, people were trapped in their houses. And Marco is an elderly beach community. So our our fire chief contacted FEMA, and told them listen, where we're close enough to that area where we can kind of and far, far enough out west where we can, as the storm passes through, we're going to kind of slip in behind the storm and and follow the storm up up the coast. And we'll we'll you know, jump into Marco

Island and start doing any type of Swiftwater saves that need to be made. Because half of the team that we deployed with was a Swiftwater component as well as a structural collapse component. So it was a very heads up move by the fire chief to figure that out with FEMA, so they gave us the permission, we really can't deploy or can't move without their specific permission, you know, so they, they don't usually like to put us on the road in the middle of a storm, you know, you can understand why with all the equipment and trucks and manpower. So, but they allowed us they allowed us to go as soon as the storm pass through, we jumped on the road. And then he made another very heads up decision the the half of the team that was Swiftwater headed towards headed towards Marco Island, because of the reports he was getting. They were getting personally the our administration and the rest of the team, the structural collapse component we took off towards what they were kind of at the time calling ground zero, which was Fort Myers Beach, we got to Fort Myers Beach, just a couple hours after, after the storm pass through there. And it was funny, we came not funny, but we came over like an overpass onto the beach and then came down onto the beach, like on let's call it Ocean Drive. And it was dead end we couldn't get any closer. Because of all the all the damage. But it kind of put us right where we needed to be the road died out, like right into the middle of a of a of a neighborhood. And we began our searches in that area. You know, the there was only a few of us, not a few of us. But there was probably 30 or 30 or 40 of us there at that time because the rest of the team had gone towards Marco but we immediately started grid searches and kind of pushing into the neighborhoods to see if we could if we could find anybody that was possibly trapped. And if if they were just wandering around the streets, which we found a lot of them at that point if there was any aid that we could get them. And that's pretty much how we spent the first I would say probably 24 to 36 hours doing that and setting up a base that we could operate out of plus working with the locals. And if I remember correctly we got attached to or they got attached to us a road clearing crew. They were a bunch of farming out of Jacksonville city of Jacksonville and man they were like gold because the roads were so just overrun with trees and vehicles and you name it it was blocked in the road and these guys had a couple of small skid steers and they had some you know pulling equipment and cable and all kinds of and they just they made their mountain of work go go very smooth and they got us roads open and they got to where we could we could punch back in further into the neighborhoods and get in to where we really needed to be so we were the first the first use our kind of component in that area for a while I want to say two and a half maybe three days just because everybody that was coming from the north south to us. You know they were having to deal with with Some road damage and, and all that stuff getting into us. So it took them, it took them a little bit of time to get to us. And by time by time, the big the big lion's share of of all the teams that responded got to that area, we had already been in an operation for like two or three days. So we were doing a lot of jumping around, that's for sure we, we did a lot of ground timing, a lot of a lot of house searches, we tried very hard to get with the local municipality and work with them to try to get some of their fire department equipment up and running. Our fire chief gave them the the aid of our the city's logistics crew, and they tried to get their some of their fire trucks running. And it was it was it was quite a, quite an operation to see. To talk to the local for the local mayor, and to talk to the local fire chief at the time. That was rough to hear those those poor guys, you know, because they were definitely they had a lot on their hands. And, you know, they were a little short staffed at the time. But a lot of researches, a ton of resources ended up coming into that area where we were able to do some seriously good work in that area, I felt very, I felt very fulfilled as a as a rescuer. And as a first responder, as we left there. I felt that that for me, I mean, you know, obviously people are gonna have other experiences. But for me, that was one of the deployments where I felt I could I could go home with a with my head held high and know that we did everything we possibly could for that community. You know, there's a lot of deployments happen and we do good work, and we help a lot of people, but there's just an overwhelming feeling of I don't want to

say unfulfilled illness. But there's an overwhelming feeling of man, I, we I just didn't do enough, or we didn't do enough, we should have did more and for this. For this, it was definitely a feeling that, you know, there was a good one it was, it was a really good feeling to when we left there that we did, we did a ton of good work there. I mean, we even rescued a 400 pound pig. That was somebody's pet and that we helped get situated. So you know, it was it was it was a positive very positive experience for being such a bad you know, some so much destruction, it was a very positive, positive experience.

 James Geering 27:49

When I talk a lot about the tactical athlete, the fitness of the firefighter, you know, that it's very easy to become complacent, like a lot of places I worked in Orange County, you know, there was single storey houses that were make entry to it wasn't a lot of high rise and things. So there's an ability to still function with a lower level of fitness. But when if I'm, if my memory serves me, right, when Rob was reporting some of the stuff that your team had to do multiple stories of evacuations, etc. Talk to me about that worst case, you know, the other side of what we might have to do and how their fitness enabled them to facilitate those rescues.

 28:26

So Rob, Rob got Rob got the short, the short straw on that one because he's the newer newer rescue team manager. So you know, obviously I had to pull some seniority on that one because what he ended up having to do was was and the crews that did it with him was was pretty grueling, there was a there was a fair amount of high rises out on the on the beach and that had elderly I don't want to say trapped in there, but they were they chose to shelter in place. Because that might be the only that condo might be the only thing that they they were attached to so they sheltered in place. Well, it's our job as part of the task force to make sure that either they're gonna stay in place and if they are we get all their information, or if they want to be evacuated. You know, we we assist in getting them at least down to the ground floors and getting them to the evacuation sites. Well. I gave that job to rob as the senior rescue team manager so he worked with with two squads full of guys to basically walk the buildings and make sure everybody was accounted for if they were staying that there you know, we got all their information that they were going to shelter in place if there's any injuries to anybody we got we took note of that, you know, already made your needs we took note of that. So basically had to account for everybody in that building one way or another and to some of them were, you know, 3035 storey buildings so these guys were with some equipment and you know, just handles and stuff they were they were walking these stairs, these high rise steps, checking every floor knocking on every door and accounting for everybody. So Rob, you know, it's in the task force, we don't, we don't just send a crew out to go do something we usually we're usually right along with them as their as their boss. And so Rob had to kind of hook that up and down them steps multiple times. You know, and you do it a couple of times, because we don't only we don't want to stretch at once like just like a house fire, we want to only search at once and then not go back to it, we'll we'll search it multiple times to make sure that we that we have it covered. So he he searched those he got to know those steps very, very intimately. You know, you can imagine doing, doing 30 stories and a high rise multiple times. plus knocking on all the doors plus carry your equipment plus carrying people down to getting people down to the


ground floor. It's not an easy task. And especially when these buildings are sealed up sitting on the beach with no AC, those stairwells get pretty, pretty hot, pretty sweaty, and it's not easy work.

 James Geering 31:27

Well, again, that's a great reminder to us the importance of worst case because you know, if you train for what you normally do every day, is that going to be enough for Vegas shooting hurricanes and etc. So I think it's a good reminder.

 31:40


And then down here too, you know, you throw in your your, your operating salt in South Florida, or southwest Florida there, but you know, during Surfside when the Surfside collapse happened, we were in our own backyard, we were on Miami Beach, and we were having teams come from, you know, from the north. And also from way out west. Those guys were kicking ass. I mean, they were working as hard as they could, but the humidity was was was destroying them because they're not used to working in, in the humidity that we work in down here. And it was you know, their work rest cycles had to be greatly altered because we would have, we would have hurt a lot of guys or put down a lot of guys with heat exhaustion because it was just, it was just too hot for them to, to work at the pace and at the West rest workcycles They were we were doing so we were having to rotate the guys that were not local, a lot more than we normally would do. Because they were they were getting they were getting just beat to hell. Because it was it was so hot and so human.

 James Geering 32:53

It's completely different. I mean, I came from England, and then joined the fire service and then started in Hialeah. And you know, going through that in gear in the Florida summer when you used English weather was quite the learning curve. I don't think you've ever acclimatized fully but you at least your baseline is a little higher when you live and breathe in you know Florida weather every single day.

 33:15

Now I tell you, as I get older it's getting it's getting harder and harder though this this last summer it was man it was tough. It's not it hasn't been it wasn't easy summer to work to work, that's for sure.

 James Geering 33:30

So I want to get back to your kind of your early life but just before we do because obviously we organically found ourselves in one other thing the reports that I got when I hear Rob talk when I hear also rob my friend that works in a neighboring department it would appear that the the death toll was a lot higher than most people realize. What was your perception of that it doesn't

even have to be specifically figures but the downplaying element almost seemed like it well it was kind of bad ish but from what I'm hearing from other people it was really really bad and I don't feel like it was given that weight through the news

 34:07

so yeah, you know, if you hear a one one death from somebody that stayed in their home and got you know, swept out to sea or got their house collapsed on you, man, that's that's one death too many, but we had a lot of those what we're finding, we're finding bodies pretty regularly. Well searching over there. And as I said earlier, you would talk to the community and ask them why they stayed, you know, and and some of them a good majority of them were not originally from that area. So they would say, well, we're not from this area, and we didn't think it was gonna get that bad or, you know, like I said earlier, we lost all our stuff to looters last time. Or we you know, they just told us it wasn't going to be that bad, but I do know that we the numbers, from what I remember, the numbers seem to jive with what the local municipality reported as, as missing or unaccounted for, that we found, you know, those numbers seem to I remember that those numbers jive. But it doesn't seem like they all got all those people got talked about. I don't think that the the general population of the States know how many people, you know, were lost over there. And it was, it was a significant amount. I don't, I don't remember the number off the top of my head, but I'll tell you, it was more than more than 10. And for each community like that,

 35:48

to me, that's pretty staggering numbers, you know, people that would stay in their homes 5050 yards from the from the beach, you know, where the title search would come in, and just completely take everything away.

 36:09

There was it was a significant amount of people, I mean, we we were finding people pretty regular. And then it got to once once more helps showed up, they got to some of it was duplication, like one team would find would find somebody and maybe they were heavily entangled in the in the rubble. And the next day, or a couple hours later, another team would find them not realizing that they that that area had already been accounted for. And they'd find the same person over again. But that that didn't happen often. But it did happen. But once the you know, we would find a mark and with GPS, and then turn them over to the homicide, Police Homicide Division and they would deal with the morgue and you know, taking them out of the rubble, once they really engaged in the work that the duplication went away real quick as they were getting them out. As soon as we were showing them where they were, they were shooting up and getting them out. So there was a little bit of a reflex time in the beginning. But once they got up and moving, they did a whole hell of a job.

 James Geering 37:30

Well, going back to the hurricane that took your home, when when you look back, you know what did you what was next you literally are in your home with all your things and your bed and


what did you what was next you naturally are in your home with all your things and your bed and everything. The next thing is a storm sweeps through and now you have nothing walk me through your family's journey.



37:47

So we got nothing basically the the insurance agent, I remember we were her first we were we were staying at my she's my wife and I lost. There you go. She's my wife now but she was she was my girlfriend at the time we were staying at her house with her. Her sister and her mom and me and my mom, we were staying at her house and homestead The house was in the house was an old house was built in the 50s but for the most part we were fine except we didn't have any power. So I would take my mom we my wife's place was probably 15 miles from from where my house was so so I would take my mom every every day she'd want to go back and try to you know pick through the pick through the rubble and find what was ours you know and on the street and see if we could save a coffee cup or you know the stuff that you try to try to salvage when you're in that mind frame. It just it's it's a little ridiculous but you're clinging on to your past you know, so doesn't seem ridiculous at the time. But so I was taking my mom back every day and one of the days we showed up there and the agent from State Farm was there and the gentleman brought her pretty much her insurance check right there on the on the spot and that area was pretty much no longer ours anymore. So we we started looking for a home and we ended up finding a small apartment or two small apartments up in the Kendall area. So my mom and I moved into one and my my wife and her family or my she was my girlfriend at the time and her family moved into another one and we basically began life in this area of of you know Miami then it was time to find jobs and and pick up the pieces so to speak. Because the place I was working at at the time I wasn't Farming at the time, obviously, because I was significantly younger, I was working at a, at an exclusive restaurant. And that got blown away. So I lost my job. And it was kind of time to, you know, realize, okay, you're trying to grow up, what are you going to do with yourself. And I had originally started out my life, to be an American literature professor of all things I was, you know, very much into, into literature. And I wanted to want to teach it, I've always wanted to teach for some reason, I've always felt that in my, in my bones in my calling to be to be an instructor. So I wanted to do to be a professor. Well, that didn't quite work out the way I had originally intended. So I was back home without a job. And I had, I had some family members that were on with the City, Miami Fire Department, and we went to a family function, and they got to talking with them. And I was, you know, had really no direction. I didn't know what I was going to do. And I started thinking about it. And I remember back when to when I was a younger kid, when I was a younger kid, I would tell my mom all the time that I was going to be a fireman. And I would tell her that, you know, I wanted to wanted to be a fireman. And I was very motivated by a book that I read when I was a kid. called, I always mess it up. I don't remember if it's 10,000 alarms, or 100,000 alarms, but it's written by he was a then Lieutenant on a rescue company on a heavy rescue company in New York. His name it's, it's, I'm drawing a blank right now. But anyway, he he wrote this book. And I remember reading it as a kid and learning what your rescue companies do and think that it was really such a cool thing. You know what they do different than than the regular regular line firemen. So I kicked it around a little bit. And I went on my own to the Florida State Fire College, which is in Ocala. I drove myself up there went, went to school up there. I stayed up there for three months, not coming home, just staying in Ocala and ended up graduating with my fire, State Fire certification and started looking for a job within probably a year of getting this this now is fast forward to let's call it 93. I went through far school from May from March to May of 93. And then, probably somewhere around the summer of 93 I went back to Ocala to take a rope rescue class on my own at the time. And I met some gentleman from a couple of guys

from the city of a Mokulele Fire Department, which is a small community migrant community on the west coast near Naples. I met them and we hit it off, we became friendly and they you know, they told me Hey, why don't you come in and volunteer with us. We run a combination department where we for volunteers we do paid per call where we'll pay you \$5 For a call. You couldn't come over on the weekends and hang out we fight fire you know, we're very busy, small department. So I did that I went over and started spending a lot of time there as a volunteer. And within about a year into 94 I got hired with them full time they offered me a job. And I ended up spending seven years there close to seven years there as a as a fireman and I left there in 99 to go to the city of Miami fire department but i i spent you know a good part of my beginning years in the fire service I spent over a Mokulele and they were small department you know sometimes we pull up to a house fire and there just be one of us on the engine. At the time they were grossly undermanned by equipment was was not in the greatest shape. But for two, we were to fire houses in that community and we were running then we were running close to like 3500 calls a year. So there were a busy, a busy little department and it taught me very fast. A bunch of different aspects of this job because you you weren't just an engine company or truck company, you had to do everything you had to do from extinguishment to overhaul to search to, you know, all aspects of it, because we were so undermanned and mutual aid was coming from 20 to 3030 miles away. So it was a while before they got to you. So you had to be able to perform on your feet of perform on your feet and perform well. So it taught me a lot about the job very early. And I kind of carried some of that experience with me when, when I got hired with the city of Miami, which is a different, different animal, you know, because you're, you're a small fish in a very big pond in the city, because we're a significantly bigger Fire Department. But I believe, I believe that working on a maglie was kind of what lead what laid the groundwork for me, taught me my work ethic very, very early on, it taught me how to be a student of the Forest Service, and then not only how to be a student, but how to be an instructor and give back by teaching different aspects of, of the VA job. So I do that now pretty extensively within multiple fire departments around the country, plus my own. You know, I am an instrument instructor and I enjoy. I enjoy that aspect of the of the job a lot, especially as I get older.

 James Geering 46:37

So was the book 20,000 alarms? Lieutenant Richard Hamilton? Yes. All right, because I that's when I looked it up, there's a picture of a Olbia copy on someone's desk. So I don't know if it's even still in print anymore. But I'd never heard of it before. So I looked it up quickly.

 46:53

I don't I don't think it's in print anymore. But man, I'll tell you for a book that was written, I want to say in the 60s or 70s. You know, it's kind of written during the war years of the FDNY. It's a great book explains, you know, he talks about his the calls that he that he that he would go on and kind of chronicles his life from being the young man all the way up to around the time he retires. And, and for for a good period of time, he was one of the higher decorated according to the book anyway, he was one of the higher decorated officers in the FDNY and I remember reading it and thinking this is, you know, this would be really cool to do. But once I graduated high school and stuff, it didn't work out that way it went that I was going to be again, as I said,

a literature professor, and then that didn't work out. And I went back to, to wanting to be wanting to be a farming, and I stuck with it. And I've tried every day to to make it to make it you know, something to be proud of.

 James Geering 47:57

Have you thought about writing a book circling around to your initial passion

 48:01

I have, I've kicked it around. I just I would have to I would have that I would have to sit with somebody that could kind of teach me the the the ins and outs of how you get something like that started because I've sat down a couple times and tried to put some thoughts to paper and it just goes like it goes all over the place and it's hard for me to follow a direction and I'm like that a lot a lot of times anyway in my head I have I've add pretty bad so I can start rambling and it sounds almost ridiculous when I when I read it back to myself so I would have to really get somebody that could kind of teach me how to you know how to put everything in order there's a lot of guys out there that do it really well you know, you got like a Coralie more Brian brush all those guys are so and they just seem like you know, intellectual gods to me next to being farming, they, to me, they just seem so smart. You know, those guys do it very well, you know, I would have to I would have to hitch my wagon to somebody like them to show me the ins and outs, you know, on how to do something like that. So for right now, I'm just doing the world for a long time. Now I'm doing more of the hands on style training. Lately, I've been working a lot with Rob Ramirez, you know, with his meaty mindset, he does all the lecture and I kind of help out with the with the hands on portion plus, I'm a full time instructor with national rescue control consultants, which we do our bread and butter is you know all technical rescue style training as well as firefighting based training, but I kind of run the man versus machine aspect of the, of the company, and it kind of head up the teaching of that, of that curriculum. So it's, it keeps us keeps us up, and I have a good time with it.

 James Geering 50:24

I think one of the enemies to reading and writing for a firefighter is our brains is just so scrambled from shift work, that it's really hard to just calm those thoughts and articulate what you're trying to say. So as I wrote a book three years ago, but that was two years into transitioning out, and it was only then and I was like, okay, because I wrote blogs, but I'm like, Okay, how now I can finally think straight. And I've been reading again, like, collate all these blogs that I did, and kind of put them and expand on them and add chapters and create a book. But I've said this a lot. I mean, my books, only 183 pages, I think something like that. I think what made it somewhat successful is small enough where we can read it, because I don't think people realize just how hard it is to create, to read to do all the things when your mind is conditioned to be on you know, on red alert the whole time, it really does have an impact on our ability to, to read and to write, I think that is,

 51:23

that is a very true statement that I've I've often believed myself and I've never heard it said by

that is a very true statement that I've often believed myself, and I've never heard it said by somebody else that has been in the service. But absolutely, and then I can only speak for my for my experience and it then you compound it with with PTSD, I suffered pretty heavy. I don't want to say suffer because, you know, that's, that's a tough word. But I deal pretty heavily with some PTSD issues. So now you compound all that other stuff of being just basically brain fried. You compound it with, you know, the signs and symptoms that you get that some people get with PTSD. And it makes it even even tougher. I mean, like even this speaking to you today, I noticed since I've been dealing with PTSD, for the last probably seven or eight years, something that I've contracted or never had was when I get a little bit of anxiety, or when I get nervous, I start to I start to stutter, or I start to put wider gaps between my words. And if you've never talked to me before, you may not touch it. But I catch it. And I, you know, so that's one one thing that I that I deal with, that I never had to deal with when I was younger, you know, growing up. So I think this job mentally takes, and I'm not I'm not going to be the guy that that bashes the job mentally because of mental issues. But this job does, you know, expend a very healthy toll on on a lot of people mentally I think, and I don't think we've begun to really tap into how much it affects some people. Yet, you know, I don't think that I think we're seeing it. We're finding out every day new new things that that how this job hurts us, but I don't think we've we've gotten a full picture yet of how much damage this job does to us mentally, you know?

J

James Geering 53:40

Yeah, I do. 100 witnesses, the creation of this podcast was that mentally and physically together? I mean, everything, you know, the number of people that we attend funerals for that, arguably should have been some of the most resilient members of a community on day one and standing on the grinder. And now, you know, cancer, heart disease, overdose suicide. I mean, it's not doom and gloom, but we have to, if we don't address the other side of it, I mean, all of us adore this profession and other people in this country, do it for free or paid on call. But the only thing is more important than the job is coming home to your family and making sure they're okay. And if that starts to shift, and now they're losing mothers and fathers and brothers and sisters, because not the job so much, but the way that we've devolved as far as the work week for the job, and you know, the lack of understanding of how to create an environment to thrive rather than fail. That's the conversation we had no one that's pushing for change is feeling anything but love for the job, but we can still do the same job in a different way and have much better results.

i

54:47

Yeah, I mean, I'll tell you, I'm coming towards I'm coming to the end. You know, I probably have I'll finish off this year and then probably, I'm looking at you know, early next year. Going into the going into the drop, and then I'll do four years and I'll be gone. So I'll probably be gone and let's call it five years total. And not because they're bad at it or not because they're doing anything that I proceed was wrong, but I'm in fear for the fire service, actually. Because I think, in my opinion, we're going to see a lot more of this before it gets any better. I don't think we've even seen, you know, the, the pinnacle of it, I think, I think we're gonna see more and, and I, you know, there's a lot of organizations now really throwing, throwing their stuff into the ring and trying to help out and, but I just don't think we've we've gotten a full grasp yet of, of what happens inside let's call a physically and mentally healthy rescuer, that all of a sudden, they decide that the best course of action is to, is to terminate their life, you know. And, and you

would think that we see one of those happen, and it immediately stops it in the in the service, but it seems like the more that we see it, and the more that we hear about it becoming commonplace, the more of an I know, I'm going to take a beating for saying this, but, and obviously put it into the context of how I'm saying it, but it almost becomes the accepted practice for us, as the as the first responders way out, you know, and it's, it's a, see, I'm worried I'm sick, you know, I think for we're going to face a significant problem. I mean, I'm not ashamed to say, uh, you know, for many years, I was embarrassed and ashamed, but I'm not ashamed to say that, that it almost got me. And, you know, I had, I had basically plan, you know, I sat around and, and kind of thought about my wife at the time the kids would be in my mom would be without me, and I started to rationalize, you know, that they would be okay. And then I sat on the couch for about a week and a half, and I didn't engage with them at all, barely spoke to them didn't go to work. And I watched the interaction between the kids and my wife, the, my mom, and I watched how they picked up the slack for me. And I watched and began to rationalize that they'd be okay without me. And I don't need to be here anymore, that I'd actually be doing them. doing them a solid by by getting rid of myself, you know. And I, my basically, I planned it, I planned exactly how I was gonna go when I was gonna go. And there were a couple of things I needed to put in place to get it done. And I was in the process of doing that. And I don't know how to this day, he doesn't really we talked about it just the other day. But to this day, he doesn't know how he figured it out. My captain of all people figured it out. He just one one morning, got an epiphany that I was gonna, I was gonna end my life and he was right. And had he not intervene. He can't, you know, he came to my house. I was supposed to be at work. And he came to my house with some members from my firehouse and had he not had he not done that I wouldn't be here because there was nothing. Nothing that was gonna stop me at the time. And this was in the 2017. There November of 2017, there was nothing that was going to stop me. I was dealing with a, you know, a massive addiction to pain medication because of an injury. And I was dealing with depression and anxiety and PTSD of dealing with, you know, visions from from responding to Haiti as a rescuer. Not feeling adequate as a man not feeling adequate as a fireman. And I just said, Fuck it. This is I'm dumped on and I'm okay, I'm out of here. I'm checking out and he figured it out. And he came and got me. But as I was saying, had he not not showing up at my house, there was nothing that was gonna stop me. I was that committed and once and that's the part I think, overall, that worries me the most about the Forest Service moving forward. And not only the Forest Service, the military police, I mean, all of us. It worries me because once we're usually pretty a type personalities and once we get our mind set on something, there's no turning back. And that's pretty much where I was at. You know, the argument of well, you know, your kids are 18 No matter I had, I had resolved myself to the fact that I was no longer going to be here and it was going to be me, who ended my own life. And I gotta tell you, that's when you made that. When you've made that connection, there's probably very few people that can speak to it on, honestly, that are still around. But when you when you've made that connection, when you've said, I am going to terminate my existence. You know, I, it's funny, I took the line from from a Lou Reed song. He said it from the song heroin, he says, I want to, I wanted to nullify my life. And that's, that's exactly how I felt I wanted to just nullify my life and make it as if I was never here. When you're in that mindset, and that's your, that's your solace, knowing that you're going to do that you're in a very, very dark place. And there's not a whole lot that's gonna, that's going to help you because you've already committed to that act, you know, so it worries me for the future, because I don't think we have all the answers yet. So, you know, we can always say what we say, Listen, if there's anybody out here listening out there listening to this podcast that feels that they're in that boat, or, or feel that they might some time get in that boat, at the end, you know, I'll give them I'll give my phone number, my social media, all of that they can contact me and I'll be more than happy to sit and talk with them. And that's really the only thing we can offer. With the hopes that it helps, you know, because I don't think we've

come up clinically yet with with a way to solve this. And it worries me greatly, that we're gonna see a lot more, especially on the addiction side as well. And I think the addiction side is the the gate, the you know, the gateway, I think that's what opens it and get you heading towards the determination of life thing. So, uh, you know, I worry, I worry a lot. I don't know that we have all the all the answers yet.

J

James Geering 1:02:16

This conversation, I think marks roughly 850 Almost, interviews are done. And so when you say, you know, a lot of people aren't here to report, clearly. And that's what's heartbreaking, so many people that we've lost. But what I've been fortunate enough, and it's not like this is a mental health podcast, this is a health podcast, this is a living, you know, getting out of pain, suffering, podcast, but the number of people that have been on here from all walks of life, including our own profession, that have been right there. And so I've got to see some really glaring commonalities. So I just to insert some hope. But this, this requires action on what I'm about to say if we're going to actually fix it. But the first thing is, the facade. That is how we perceive suicide. And just like you said, you know, it's cowardly, you know, how could they do that? It's so selfish, think of your kids, the number of people I was going to ask you this, but you already answered that. That said, I truly believe that I was a burden to my family, and that they will be better off. And there is no better tragic example of that than the two police officers we lost in Florida a few months ago, the boyfriend first and then the girlfriend, and they left behind an infant child that illustrates how broken these brains are. And that's not from a judgy way that's a biochemical trauma based element that you're what used to be your self preservation has now completely twisted to where you truly believe that the best thing for my whatever a month year old child is that I am not here anymore, which is why it's so hard for people that aren't struggling to understand because they don't understand.

i

1:04:11

You know, I've heard you in the past mentioned. I know for a fact you mentioned it during Rob's podcast, but you've mentioned it in a few others, Mattie Negley i i had the opportunity to speak to his brother not not too long. Matter of fact, that was last year. We were at the Orlando Orlando fire conference and we were we were in the instructors meeting. I was sitting next to next to rob and he got up like he normally does and he you know, he spoke he thanked everybody for for being there and somehow the conversation got on, you know, he got to opening up a little bit. And speaking and he said, you know, the one? The one question that's still that's still haunting me is if he could, if he could he won't ask his brother why, you know, and I don't know, I, you know, I spoken to him in the past and heard him heard him say that more than once, but just that day for for whatever reason, it hit me like, like a ton of bricks, you know. And I could see the pain on his face. And, you know, it was it was just a hard day. And I felt it on my heart to kind of approach him. And normally, I wouldn't really do that. Because, I mean, I have no problem talking about it with anybody, and I'm not ashamed of it. But I don't want to make anybody else's pain worse, either. You know, so I'm always very careful of how I go about things. But I approached him and and I said, you know, when you were saying yesterday, you'd want to know why and you know, it. woulda, coulda was there anything that you could have done to stop it? And, you know, we're both standing there two grown men crying, and you know, and I told him, I said, I'm here to tell you know, that, there's a very good chance No, that you would not have stopped. Even if you said to him, I know what you're

planning, there's a good chance that you would not have stopped if he was committed to continuing. And he kind of looked at me, like, you know, how can you say that? And then I explained to him how I could say that, how I could kind of be the verification of that. And there was, I think it was a conversation that was meant to happen, you know, I think, for whatever reason, they put some, the universe put me in, in the place where I could have that conversation with him, because it's been, you know, I think it needed to be said, I think he was he was feeling pretty, pretty badly that day. And I've even spoke with, you know, other members of that department. Where they've asked me, you know, did you did you think about not doing it? What, what was going through your mind? And, and you hit it on the head when you said, broken, you know, that part of us is broken? I don't know whether it just shuts off after so much suffering, so much suffering that we see or if there's a single event that shuts it off? I don't know, I don't know the answers. But I know, the accumulative effect. It breaks us and I think I think for, for me and the guys from Orlando, I think it was it was a good, a good moment. It needed it was a conversation that needed to be said, you know, and, and I felt really good afterwards, it was was a little bit of a rough spot, getting through it. You know, like I said two big guys sitting there butter on on each other. But they definitely, it definitely needed to be, you know, it was something that needed to be said. So I don't know what made me tell you that. But

 James Geering 1:08:09

that what again, it is that feeling of a burden. Thus, you know, burdensome. I think that's, that's one thing for bringing solutions to this that needs to be brought into the awareness piece. Like not, you know, hey, give me a call if you're struggling. I mean, you can put that on. But I would argue most people in crisis are not going to pick up the phone and call me call someone.

 1:08:30

Oh, because, you know, how am I going to call x Person X when I know that person X was sitting in the kitchen, the shift before making fun of some other guy for maybe not wanting to kill himself, but for for whatever reason, he was making fun of them. So that's something that we got to deal with to is the, you know, is the safety Enos of it. And what do I mean by that is, are you going to hold my secrets? Are you going to and I don't mean hold them. Like my secrets, like I, you know, did something that worked the law, I mean, my secrets like, Hey, I'm thinking about often myself, are you going to either get me into direction that I need to go with getting help? And are you not going to take it back and make fun of it? Because if you do that it's going to make it worse and let's let's be real. I'm a part of it too. And the Forest Service we like to, we like to take shots and we like to like to dig at people you know, and maybe maybe that's part of it, too. Maybe people are afraid to come forward because they're afraid that they're that their junk is gonna get thrown out on on Front Street for everybody to see, you know. I don't know. I can tell you another really big problem that I hear that multiple departments are having is what I call the reintegration factor. So you have a member who is suffering from some sort of addiction, let's call it opiates, because that was mine suffering from an opiate addiction, send them away to get help. When he comes back, and is ready to assimilate back into into service? How do you? How do you as a department train them? How do you put them on days? Until you feel that he's ready, ready to go back? Do you have him meet with the city? You know, with the city psychologist? Do you drug test him repeatedly make him sign paperwork that says you can be drug tested X amount of times that he

anytime? Do you just send them back to work? What is the what is the reintegration policy in your department? And I will tell you, that's, that is big on whether that member will possibly fail, again, or whether they will succeed and stay clean? Is how they're treated when they get back. Um, I think some departments are doing it right. And I think some departments are doing it not so right. You know, that I think it's it's going to take strong leaders, community and fire department and police and, you know, strong leaders to say, I'm going to treat this guy like a human being and like, like somebody that is that is hurting, when he gets back, I'm going to you know, make it mandatory that he does certain things if he wants to get back to the firehouse, but I'm not going to treat him any lesser than that he that I did before he went away. And I think sometimes that tends to happen, you know, I think we could talk for days about the PTSD side of it. The addiction side of it is huge as well. And I think in our profession, it's a little bit accepted, you know, and that starts with, you know, we're all going to have a drink or two. After we get off shift, or we had a rough shift, let's go knock down a case of beer. And listen, I'm not I'm not speaking out against that. I've obviously been a part of that, that lifestyle for going on 30 years. And I believe some of the best learning in the Forest Service happens when a bunch when a bunch of old guys are mentoring a bunch of new guys over a couple beers. So that's not what I'm saying what I'm saying, but I think that our profession lends itself to, to addiction, different addictions, pretty easily, you know? Because it's, it's a safe place, it becomes our solace, whatever our addiction is, becomes our our solace and our, our safe spot. It makes us feel comfort, you know, and ultimately, we're all whether that we're the baddest bodybuilder CrossFit boxer guy or we're on there nerd, a nerdy, you know, bookworm we're all looking for the same thing. And that's, that's comfort, whatever that comfort, however, we get that confidence is dependent on, you know, on us, but I think in the long term, we really need to look at the, at the addiction side of things more seriously than we're looking at them now and just saying, Oh, that guy's like, as a drug addict, we need to write them off. No, there's, there's a reason, you know, and we need to kind of find that reason, I think, I think the addiction side of it definitely goes hand in hand with the PTSD side of it.

J

James Geering 1:13:59

100% Well, I think there's a couple of areas like I said, with hope that I think if we truly address and like you said, it requires courageous leadership because there's so much resistance to changing this at the moment, but having worked for four departments, so that's for hiring processes for academies, you know, for probations I got pretty good at you know, mopping floors. Firstly, when I look at all the times I did the psych test and the polygraph, and then you take a step back and then you ask through this podcast, all these mental health professionals. polygraph is bullshit. We all know that. You know, it's smoke and mirrors getting you to admit to something the Minnesota personality test is the one they use from the psychiatric test. Everyone that's been on here has said that is not a valid test stand alone. It's part of a gamut of tests for forensic psychology not to determine if a candidate is good to be a firefighter or not. So both of those are invalid. So my fear First thing is we shift our thinking to the understanding that most people that are going to walk into our profession are going to have elements of childhood trauma, you know, we've talked about the off Off mic, we're not going to go down your path for a specific deliberate reason, but you yourself have got the same exact thing. So we, you know, our professional tracks that, you know, we want to be the protector, we want the buck to stop here, we want to, you know, also I think, seek adrenaline because it does kind of stuff some of those memories down to. So at the front door, you take the budget that you already fucking have, and you Stop the bullshit testing. And instead, because you're doing a background check, done a physical test, you've done a written test, you've you've checked criminal history, so you know, this is a good person who's the right fit. So stop box, check in

with the stupid things that don't mean anything. But instead, give your brand new recruits, let's say six counseling sessions. So now at the front door, they've had the opportunity to offload some trauma, the mental health conversation has been normalized. And the barrier to entry of finding a counselor has been removed, because you literally have a go to person, whether they work for an agency and the size of yours, that was a possibility. Or if they're smaller, they obviously contract someone locally. So right there, that's the first part. The second part is the sleep deprivation side. And I've talked about this, this is one of the reasons I began this podcast because once I became educated and had that aha moment, I realized how fucking insane it is the way that we work are people. But to summarize what I had, I talked about this in a lot of different ways. But I had a conversation with a marine recon friend, he was one of their human performance gurus as well. And I was educating him because we're about to be part of a collection of evidence to show the fire service how far from human performance we are. And this is from an organization that works with NASA and the Navy SEALs, DARPA. So this is going to be incredible once this has finished in November. But he's part of the panel, I'm part of the panel. And I was trying to explain to him, the sleep deprivation side and my everyone, you know, that's kind of got their toe in the water talks about Matthew Walker and like, oh, did you know that 24 hours without sleep is the same as a blood alcohol of point one? And I was like, and he brought that up. And I was like, Well, here's the problem. That's a group of college students that have done some research work, and gone in and not slept for 24 hours. We're talking about men and women that haven't slept every third day for 1020 30 years. So we're talking multiples of that point one. And he said, was there any research being done on I know, we've researched the shit out of smoothbore nozzles and tiny houses and flow patterns, but we won't do anything on the health of the first responder, fucking, almost nothing. And so I explained to him, and he's like, you know, what I've just realized, if you if you submitted a request to do a study on the fire service, and you said, I need these subjects to not sleep for 24 hours every third day, for two months, I'm sorry, for two weeks for a month, whatever it would be, ethically, you wouldn't even be able to do that study. That is the other part of the conversation.



1:18:13

They would shut you down. They would they would literally shut you down. Because you did they'd say you're torturing, you're torturing yourselves, your subjects, you know, and then on top of it, not only do you take away their ability to sleep, but then you give them false hope you tell them hey, go lay down. Let's okay, go lay down. And you put them you put them down and they're down for 45 or so. And then you come into the room, pots and pans simulate the the alarm and they got to get up and now



James Geering 1:18:45

perform zero to 100 Yeah.



1:18:49

And when I got hot when I got hired with the city of Miami, we didn't have we didn't have the the first what it's called First Alert. We didn't have the first alert system that we have now. What we had was all on speakers and Klaxons that just went off in station and then you had a

watchman that was you know an older gentleman probably Vietnam era veteran and he would get on the lot don't get on the loudspeaker and screaming to the microphone you know engine six, you got to run right in the market and the speakers right over your head, you know, that contributed contributes to, to a lot of it too. And I think it just there's multiple systems within us that either get shut off or get broken like you said over a period of not sleeping. Then you You couple that with you know responding to Haiti as a rescue or you couple it with coming back to the firehouse after not being asleep for 18 hours and Washington some guys blood off of your uniform or, you know, just all of the gloom and doom that goes with the job, or just simply having to perform delicate maneuvers after not sleeping, I'm part of, I'm assigned to the technical rescue team, I ride, I ride the heavy rescue in my department, and I'm signed to the heavy rescue rescue team, I can't tell you how many times in my career, I've gone. Maybe I'm holding and now I'm on the back end of a 48 I haven't had hardly any sleep, and I'm having to cut a teenager out of a car, or I'm having to perform a rope rescue incident or somebody's under a train. You know, that wraps it up even higher. Your your, you know, let's put regular firefighting aside for a second and talk about the guys that have to perform. You know, advanced advanced procedures. I think just the long term effects for us, it's it's too great. I think I don't I don't know. I would love I would love to see the numbers on a study like You're like you're getting to get ready to do I would think that that is going to be the numbers are going to be crazy. In what you guys are able to, to show and not show, you know, I think it's going to be a very worthwhile study, however you guys choose to go.

J

James Geering 1:21:26

The sad thing is it's not even needed. But the what I get because I've talked about, you know, 22 Oct 2472 being the industry standard. Now for seven years since I started this podcast. I just had Jared Vermaelen on who's from Boca, just talking about that. You know what I mean? Like literally we have a department now to I think Boynton just went to it. Trying to get the person who spearheaded I think there's a lot of politics and there wasn't a real kind of go getter that I can find it was more by default by by politicians that didn't like each other and unions and administrations from what I understand it, but she's very disappointing. But anyway, you know, it's already there, the Northeast that everyone reveres FDNY don't work 56 hours a week. You know what I mean? So this is what's so fucking insane. But what drives me crazy is that, you know, firstly, we believe our own myth, and I'll just say this very quickly, because I talk about it sometimes. For the longest time, we've all said I work one day on two days off, you know, what a day, for most people is nine hours with a one hour lunch was an eight hour day. So we work three days crammed together. So it's actually three days on one day off, the second day isn't a day off, because you work from midnight to eight. So that's not a day off, you work that day. So three days on one day off, and it's not 10 days a month, it's 30 days a month. When you put it that way, all of a sudden, you're like wait a second, I thought that was the whole point the firefighters schedule was amazing. It's not, it should be because we're asking people to be awake all night, we should have the rest and recovery and doesn't matter if you look at cancer, injury, heart disease, obesity, autoimmune disease, suicide overdose, you know, or addiction, excuse me, it's all the common denominator is lack of sleep. Now, there are other contributing factors. But if we're not sleeping, you put me in a dark room, I'm gonna fall asleep. That's what happens. We're supposed to go to sleep when it's nighttime. So if we're gonna ask our men or women to be awake, while everyone else goes to bed, they should have if nothing, a shorter work week than the average civilian. So the fact that we're working on 56 hours or 48 with a Kelly, and then there's a mandatory so now you're on an 80 Hour Work Week, which I did a lot of my career as well, is absolute insanity. But we're believe our own myths, the you know, the short sighted people in the leadership positions don't want to talk about anything other than

what looks good in a budget year, even though they're actually bleeding money, because their cities and counties are paying hand over fist for workman's comp, you know, the overtime on those vacant positions, the medical retirements, the lawsuits, because when we make mistakes, so it's wrong, no matter which way you look at it, and people will go Oh, yeah, but that's gonna cost money. Yeah, you know, it costs money to build the bright line from Orlando, but you still fucking did it. Because you know, 10 years from now you're gonna make money. That's what happens. Sometimes you have to make brave decisions, invest in your people, and you will save money hand over fist down the road. So it's insanity no matter which way you look at it, but until we're all educated enough to band together and union stop fighting over a 50 cent pay raise but actually advocate for the working conditions. Only then with a like I said, counseling at the front door, a work week like Bowker's will we really, really move the needle on this and then we can start picking up the smaller things after that.



1:24:50

Yeah, I I definitely think you're onto something. You know, and like you said, you attack you attack the, the big, the big thing in the room And then you go through the smaller things. And I think once you, once you bring all of that together, I think you'll really start to see results, you know, because there's just so many different aspects of what we're talking about here. You know, I'll give you another one. I am not gonna, I'm not gonna say I'm an advocate of drug use, but I personally think that th, you know, THC going away and drug panel tests. For us, it would be a positive because you could have a guy that is dealing with some PTSD issues doesn't sleep real well, to begin with. Now, you compound that with work problems. So now he takes you know, as he takes Xanax or takes antidepressant or takes whatever he takes, so he can sleep, and he ends up becoming addicted to those drugs. Well, maybe the lesser of two evils is THC, and metered and metered doses. You know, there's been, there's been some studies that show for, for PTSD, things like THC, things like psilocybin, things like you know, things in those different areas in metered micro doses, dosages are a ton better than, you know, two or three milligrams Xanax or more if if the guy's addicted, but I think you you would probably not ever find, or they'd be very few, because I will say very few, because some of them have stepped up, you'd be very, very shocked to see the head of a department say I'd rather I'd rather have my members. If they have to take something use THC or psilocybin then benzos you know, and some departments have done that. New York took THC out of the Police Department took THC out of their out of their drug panel. City of Pittsburgh, I believe has taken out of their drug panel, there's there's departments now that have started to look at it. Because their their leadership has said I'd rather have a guy that is or a gal that is, you know, eating a THC gummy so they could go to sleep as opposed to taking x amount of milligrams of Alexei Xanax or something along those lines, you know, so? I don't know, I don't know, I think there would have to be some, some regulating it, you know, on how they how it was allowed. But I think that even something like that would be a start, you know?



James Geering 1:27:40

Well, I think just to having a limit, you know, I think, you know, you can be high as a kite on shift. And that's not acceptable. Obviously, you know, you're the you're the engineer operating the aerial, and you're seeing Tweety birds everywhere. But that's different than you had it to go to sleep and you've got a trace amount in your system now.



1:27:56

Right? What is that? And do you have a drug policy in your department that says, As long as you have a prescription for for Xanax, you can take it so now that engineer could be operating still loopy as hell, because he's eaten a ton of Xanax before lunch? Yeah, you know. So that's what I'm getting at is what's the lesser of two evils? You know, I don't know. But I do know that there's been a lot of study that goes along with the THC and with with micro dosing, psilocybin, and even micro dosing MDMA. And they're finding that it's, overall, it's a lot more conducive for healing as far as your brain and, and performance than being on the normal on the normal gamut of, you know, strike drugs or anxiety drugs that we take, you know, so? I don't know, man, I do know, I'm gonna I'm gonna say my original statement is that I'm still a little worried and scared for the future of, of the fire service, police, police service military, because I don't think what, I don't think we're there yet, you know, and I think we're gonna see some more, some more of that before it gets any better. But I do have hope. Because there are people like you that are, you know, that are pledged to find to finding, you know, an answer. So at least we have that, you know,



James Geering 1:29:27

yeah. Well, I think I we had two suicides locally. And the chief said, you know, we don't have the answers, and this is the problem. We do have the answers to, I mean, again, we can't be absolute doesn't mean that you're going to save every single one. But we have the answers to make a huge, huge dent on physical and mental health. But that requires people to find some courage and if they're not courageous, then Alright, vacate that position, put someone and I'm talking unions administration's all the positions because there's unions out there that are phenomenal. And as unions is out there that oppose fitness standards, if you will, that kind of union, maybe you should step down and allow a real leader to come in and actually address the things that are killing our men and women.



1:30:08

You're absolutely correct. I think I think it's going to take exactly what you said it's going to take, it's going to take some courage. But more than anything, I think it's gonna take honesty and the honesty is is, you know, that's where you're the rubbers gonna meet the road, if you have something that you know is that you know, is going to work. You need to be a leader enough to say, Listen, City Commission, I don't care what you think this is what the numbers say. And the numbers say that this is more beneficial for my members than say this, you know. And but we know that once you start doing things like that your chances of a rehire or your chances of reelection start to go down. And at the end, that's what people look at first, you know, so it's going to take, it's going to take somebody that is, or it's going to take people that are that are not selfish, you know, and not only looking for their, for themselves to be reelected, or, you know, kept on the payroll, and worried about their jobs. You know, and I know, I know, of the department that you were speaking of, I believe you're talking about Marion County where they've taken a beating over the last several years with suicides and, and the like, it's been really rough on those guys. Really, really? They've taken a shellacking, you know, yeah, that's why. Oh, okay. I didn't I knew you lived in Florida. I just didn't know. I didn't know quite where Yeah, I have. I have a couple of buddies at work that work there. And it's been pretty rough. They've taken a meeting and it's been young, you know, some of them the

younger members, too. So it's not only affecting the, the old guy, you know, it's affecting younger guys on the job. It's affecting middle of the road, and it's affecting guys at the end, you know?

J James Geering 1:32:15

Absolutely. Yep. And I see it, like I said, I've even got friends that I knew before they became Marin County firefighters when I was working, you know, and I've saw seven short years of decline to, you know, mental health struggles leaning into TRT and these young fit people. So I've literally got to witness a timeline from pre Marion County, you know, service and then the breakdown, you know, and this is 56 No, no, Kelly, you know, understaffing so mandatories all the time. And they're just getting literally worked into the ground. And there are answers. And this is what's exciting is this particular study I'm a part of was a local Ocala businessman that said, What is going on, and it's him. He's made his money in the the scrap industry that stepped up and said, I will fund this this research. So it's not even a fire service member this this steps up, you know what I mean? So, I'm excited because I think it's going to be incredible. But back to my initial point, the fact that we even have to prove that, for example, the 42 hour work week will be healthier than a 56 hour work week. That in itself is insanity that you need to see studies to show that, but that's another entire conversation.

i 1:33:24

Yeah. And then and then once you show them the study, you actually have to really convince them that the numbers show they don't believe.

J James Geering 1:33:30

Exactly. All right, well, then you've you've touched on Haiti a few times you join city of Miami, you ended up becoming part of Task Force to I was at Orange County at the time, because I speak basic French. And so when they hit the Haiti earthquake hit, I was petitioning my department, Lo, we were going to send some people it's like on our doorstep. You know, we have a lot of Haitian people in the Orlando area as well. So you know, a lot of us are even somewhat well versed in running on the Haitian people. And there was so much feet dragging that by the time they said, oh, actually we are, you know, submit, we'll make a list that they were actually pulling teams by that point, which was weird, because it seemed very premature. They were still finding people out there. So talk to me about, you know, your your journey into the task force. And then let's start with that deployment, because it seemed like it was very traumatic for you specifically.

i 1:34:22

Yeah, that, you know, if I had to, if I had to point a finger at my beginning of having, let's say, having PTSD issues or having issues, let's call it I would say Haiti was the Haiti was definitely the what pulled the trigger. So I was a brand new Rescue Team Manager on the team. I hadn't deployed in that position yet. I had worked my way up through the team to get to that So that position and we get the call that we're going so that I'm going to be one of the, one of the

rescue team managers. So we, you know, we get to Haiti, we ended up responding under, under US, US aid. Instead, we got attached to US aid instead of FEMA. Because US aid is the ones who support the teams when they go international. So we, we kind of got assigned to them. And, you know, we're told to basically report to the homestead Air Force base with all our equipment at such and such a time, we're going to get on a bunch of C 130s. And we're going to fly over to Haiti and go and save the day. So we, we get to homestead Air Force Base, and basically, we run into problems right away, where they're, the commanding officer of the base didn't know we were coming. He's given us a hard time about flying over. Long story short, we end up getting over there. We land in Haiti, we get off the plane, and we're ready to start working. And we look around and there was just so much devastation. I mean, I can't even I don't think there was so much devastation doesn't even make sense of it all. So we check in with, with a representative from USAID to try to find out what our what our rules of engagement are, what areas Oh, do you want us to work what you know, because in the phenol world, where we follow a very strict guidelines set of rules, you know, we perform the same way every time Well, when we got got to 80. with USAID. It was still early enough in the in the response period that they were still trying to put their stuff together to so the girl, the girl that was the representative, she kind of just said look around them, you know, pick an area and go to work. So we put we put our heads together, we came up with a with a base of operations, we got to the United States Embassy there, and we we offloaded some equipment and made like a staging area there. We set up some tents, so we had a place to sleep. And but while all that was going on the ground pounders we were out, we were out working. So when we landed in Haiti, we had already been up, you're talking about speaking, we'd already been up for, like 24 hours, when we got to Haiti, we, we immediately went to work. So that added another 24 rotation to the to the shift. So we by time we laid down for the first time, we had been up for 48 hours and made multiple rescues. I was kind of thrown right into the mix. You know, I had I had a group of men that was going to fall under my command. And then the the other rescue team manager had a group that was going to fall under his command. And we started we split the team and started started going out into the into the community and trying to to affect some rescues. As it turns out, my group got assigned to an area actually to a building called the Caribbean market. And what that was was if you think of like a multi level five, like five to seven storey building, that is like a Costco, but that they have something on every floor, you know, they had groceries on the bottom floor, clothing on the second floor, electronics on the third floor. So they had something on every floor. This was like the main shopping shopping center for for Port au Prince. And it it it serviced wealthy and not so wealthy. So there's a mix of people in there. It was a five story five storey building that was reduced down to about three feet of sort of searchable space with a mound of rubble on top of it. We were getting multiple reports that there were people trapped inside and making contacts through yelling and banging on pipes and all kinds of things. So my group went over to that area. And we began to do the beginning stages of a search and we immediately we were immediately faced with what we thought at the time was a ton of people still in the building. We didn't know how many at the time but we knew there was a lot of them still in the building. There were multiple search markings on the building from international teams saying that there was Nobody left in the building. You know, everybody had expired. But in all, in all actuality, there were a lot of live people still in the building. So we went to work, trying to find ways to get in and get these people out. And, of course of kind of working in that area, we kind of threw a lot of a lot of other teams started showing up in Haiti. So we kind of threw all our eggs in one basket, and we brought the whole team through that area. And we basically the whole team worked that that site, because as I said, it was a big building that came down. And it had a full basement underneath it. So there was a lot of area to search and a lot of area around it to search. So we, we decided to kind of concentrate just in that area. throughout several days, we made multiple rescues. There we were able to GPS mark, geo mark, multiple deceased. And we would

compare some notes with the owner of the it was a privately owned business, and he stayed on the the gentleman that owned it stayed on the scene. And, you know, we would confer with him and he knew his building so well that I could go to him and say, okay, Samir, we're talking to a lady that you're in, she's in the grocery area. She's tough. She's on the first floor, she's telling us that she's able to reach out to her right and grab energy bars. And he he'd show us a map and he'd say, Okay, you're in Iowa, one, about 20 feet into the aisle, and she's reaching to her right. So he knew his store that well. So we would tell him, All right, listen, we got um, we're talking to a lady. But then next to her is another lady that's wearing, you know, a red or red, she's telling us she's wearing a red shirt. And he'd say, okay, that's, I believe, that's Louise. So we look to see if Louise was missing. And if she was missing, we'd, we'd make sure we got a good marking with the GPS. And then we, on his note, his notes, we would mark her as, as accounted for she's deceased, but she's accounted for. So we were able to, we were able to kind of put closure to about, you know, 90 people or so for him, I'm in the process of doing that we came upon a little girl that was that was in the rubble, and she was trapped in the rubble and her mother and sister had, had expired. And they were basically the way they were entangled in the rubble. She was not able to get out. So when we when we discovered that we looked at all different ways to get her out of the rubble. And basically, the only way we were going to get that poor little girl out alive was if we took apart certain parts of her mother and sister. And I was involved in that aspect. I'm not going to go into too much detail, but I was involved in that aspect. Throw on top of all of that we're dealing with aftershocks, because aftershocks were happening every couple hours, though, we'd be in this destroyed building, and the whole building would start shaking. You know, and we'd have to run out and then regroup and then go back in. And so, you know, it was just stress, like, to the 10th degree, every moment of of that deployment. And I really got to understand quickly the burden of commands because I was,



1:44:20

you know, in my job even now, I'm a jumpseat fireman. I mean, I'm a driver, I drive the heavy rescue but I'm considered a jumpsuit fireman I don't have rank. I am the senior man at my firehouse but I don't have an officer rank and u star we don't use rank we you you promote through experience so I had earned that position but I but I got to feel the burden of command very greatly because I really thought that one of those aftershocks was going to bring that building down and I was gonna end up killing some of my members, you know, but I remember thinking Seeing in my head that not that it would be okay. But that it would be okay if you follow my meeting because they were going after live people, you know, these weren't bodies, they were they were trying to dig out of the rubble, these were people that were viable victims, they were talking to us and, you know, there was nobody else coming for them had we not gotten them? Yeah, I mean, it was the it was the, the prime example of what we're told, you know, if there's nothing to say there's nothing to save, if there's, there's something is saved, and you throw everything at it. And and we did, and it ended up you know, great, a great success story, we come home and we get we ended up getting getting seven people out of that out of that just that one building and through other people out of another building. So we ended up saving nine souls while we were there. That's a significant number. Looking at collapse building type, or an earthquake style, rescues in the funeral world, you know, nine people on a single deployment is, is a pretty, pretty impressive number. So we came home, we were happy, you know, and everything was normal when I got home and I was you know, I was, but the stresses of life continue on, you know, I was I had been in Haiti for 21 days. And I get home I walked through the front door, you know, I dropped my drop my bags on the ground, Hey, honey, I'm home. And you know, it's she's like, oh, yeah, you're done saving the world? Well,

you know, the poop pumps busted, the dog needs to go to the vet, the yard needs to be mowed. You know, all that shit still needs to be done, even though you're off saving the world, you know, so you're back. Good, I'm glad but get the work, you know. And over the next couple of months, I just started to it started out slow it was you know, I began to lose motivation and doing things that I normally like to do. Then I started getting irritable than you know, I started to have some, some trouble sleeping. And it started in, in the ways of bad dreams. Like I would I would wake up, you know, screaming or I would fidget a lot in my sleep, like try to I would bring my hands together or roll my hands on my arms or whatever. And my wife would ask me while I was sleeping, what are you doing? And I would tell her I can't get the blood off me I can't get the blood off me. And I was dead asleep. I don't remember telling her any of that. So it started to show in little aspects but you know, hey, I'm just tired I'm not sleeping well, you know, I would tell myself all kinds of things. But it started to progressively get worse and then I had a small back injury I tweaked my back a little bit and went to the doctor and was given some some pain meds got home and started taking the meds regularly you like I'm supposed to I wasn't abusing them but I said man I you know fuck here it is. This is the this is the fucking ticket. Why? You know, why haven't I found this earlier? Productive again. When I take these meds I feel good. I want to engage people. Man, this is awesome. You know, this is giving me my life back. Well, pills ran out like they normally do and the doctor said, Okay, you're done. You're you don't need start taking Advil. Well, I got a jumped on, jumped on the computer and found, you know, pills that I could buy online at the time. And so I started self medicating, and I was doing great. Things were you know, things were, were starting to feel better. But I was still dealing with with sleep issues with bad dreams. I was still was starting to have some marital problems. It started to really, really now take off and start to surface that went on for about two years to Haiti was 10 in 2012. I was working at home trying to get my house prepared for for hurricane of all things I was coming. And I fell from a ladder here at my house here at my house and I fell 32 feet and I landed when I landed I landed in my neighbor's yard. And I landed he's got all pavers in his yard and I landed standing up like flat footed standing up so I completely like shocked and destroyed my left my left femur where it comes out from the hip bone and turns into The femur completely destroyed. And then I had five compression fractures in my lower back, and some other traumas to the rest of rest of my body. So I was messed up and he told me I'd probably never, never ride a fire truck again. You know, and I know that goes with that. So I get out of the Get out of the medical rehab center, I come home, again, I'm given some pain meds, I start taking the pain meds and start doing what I have to do to get back to the firehouse. But my usage of the pain meds are increasing. And then long story short, I ended up going to see a pain management doctor and they gave me a ton of time pain medication. So now I'm off to the races. That went, I started self medicating, heavily, heavily self medicating. 2012 and that went till 2017 Until I said, I'm going to I'm going to end this you know, miserable, not doing any good for my family, as we talked to you about earlier. At that time. I was receiving medication from the doctor, I was receiving 98 milligram Dilaudid every seven days along with 120 at extended release a milligram oxy cotton's I was going through all of that within three days. And I was the Dilaudid I was crushing and mainlining I was into IV drug use instead of taking them the way that that I was supposed to take them. So I had a major major opiate addiction. And, you know, it just kind of took me out and i i point, all fingers really kind of start that trigger was he, you know, the gun, the thing that got fired and turned me into this person was was Haiti combination with with falling from the ladder, you know. The biggest problem was when I came home from Haiti and started realizing I was having issues. I blew them off. And, you know, my support structure wasn't the healthiest that it could have been either because I was starting to have some marital issues, and she just didn't, you know, at the time, she didn't really feel like listening to my bullshit, you know, and it's just the way it turned out. But I didn't really have a support or support system because I had nobody to go to. Well, I did honestly, I have somebody people I could have gone to. And probably they would have told

me the same thing. Because now that I've come this far, I found out that some of these people that I would consider my support system, they were dealing with the same issues but not saying anything. So it was like a handful of us that were dealing with issues from Haiti, trauma from Haiti, but not talking to each other about it. So I probably could have went to somebody, but back then I was younger, I thought I was more bulletproof, so to speak, you know, I was the guy like, I'm sure you hear it 100 times on this podcast, nothing like nothing bothered me, you know, going on calls, seeing blood and guts, doing field amputations. None of that shit ever bothered me. So I couldn't imagine that this was Haiti that was taking me out but it was and I never I never asked for any help. I never I just tried to self medicate and the more I self medicated the better I felt so the more medication I would use on my own you know, and that it'd be a good start started as a great thing. But it ended up being a huge part of the problem you know,



1:54:21

as normally happens with medication but it you know, I look back on it now and I feel obviously I feel good about my journey and and I've been able to get clean and I haven't used I haven't used opiates and I just you know we just saw I just celebrated six years of being being clean so that's a big milestone for me. I'm pretty happy about that, especially with the rate of relapse for for for opiate use usage, but if there was a time where I didn't don't remember who I was before that incident, you know, I look at pictures of the before and the after, and a man that I am now and, and it's funny because I don't, there's times I don't really recognize that young, smiling naive kid that went to Haiti, you know, I know the guy that came back, but I don't necessarily know the guy who wants anymore, you know. And there was, in my opinion, it was a bunch of things that just came together in a perfect storm, you know, it was the, there was the stress and the burden of command while being over there. It was coming back and going right back to work. I'm not talking about my issues, having issues here at home that I came home to, you know, it was just a bunch of things that came together all at one time. And I'm sure that there's many people that will say, well, kid, that's life, you know, you got to get past it. And for certain extent, I agree, but at the time, I didn't have any tools to help me just get past it, you know, my tool was shut up, take the drugs, and just get on the truck and keep your mouth shut, you know, and that, that compounded my issue greatly. So, now, I tried to, you know, I tried to look at things constructively and say that maybe maybe it'll happen for a reason. Maybe it happened to put me on the path that I'm on now. You know, I don't necessarily travel and lecture and travel and speak about a lot of this stuff, but I've done a few podcasts before this one and now are yours. And, you know, like I told you, when when we first started talking, I have no hang ups anymore, about talking about this aspect of my life. I don't wear it as a as a badge of shame anymore. You know, I did for many years, I was I was very, very much embarrassed about it. Because, you know, I was, you know, I used I used to use derogative terms about myself, I call myself out, you know, I was a junkie and, you know, I would use just scathing remarks about myself, but I try not to do that anymore. I mean, it pops up every once in a while, but I don't look at it as a as a badge of shame anymore, I try to try to put a different spin on it, and I'm open to help anybody that I can that may be possibly going through this, I try to really engage them and, and reach out and try to do something for them that I can because I realize how, how crippling this, you know how crippling addiction and PTSD can really be you know, and listen, I'm not the addiction side of it, it's not so strong with me anymore. I mean, I'm not gonna lie to you, James, I still have my days where, where I think about it, and I still have days where I wake up in the middle of the night dreaming about doing dope, and, you know, it scares the shit out. But I'm able to get past it, you know. And I still have days where I get depressed, and I get down and I get feel like shit. But they don't, they don't

stick with me as long as they used to now because I do have tools that I have. I've gotten myself some people that are right, or die, people now that I trust that I can go to, or that I can call in the middle of the night and say, Hey, man, I'm having an issue or, for me that that is big. And then I try to I try to stay busy. You know, boredom for me was always a bad thing. And it's funny. You mentioned earlier in the podcast that you know, a lot of stuff we can take back to early childhood traumas and experiences. And while I was going through all of this, and one of the one of the facilities that I that I went to, to try to get me back on track, they did a pretty in depth, psychological profile. And it was a give and take between you and a psychologist and a lot of the stuff that they came up with, like my boredom thing that came over the fact that you know, when I was a kid from from being a young age from the time I was six years old until I graduated high school, I, I was on my own during the day, I would go to school and then I was a latchkey kid, at six years old, I would get dropped off by the bus, walk a mile home, let myself into my house. And because my mom was working two and three jobs, so she wasn't there. I would have to make myself a peanut butter and jelly sandwich and provide for myself until she got home in late hours. So things like that the determined was kind I know what puts me in a position where boredom is, is a huge trigger for me, they kind of broke a bunch of different things down. And it was a, it was a really enlightening study on yourself, you know, you got to see kind of what makes yourself tick. So I use, I usually try to kind of analyze that kind of stuff on my own if I feel a certain way. And then the last thing that I do to try to keep myself on the straight and narrow ish is, I had a addiction counselor that told me he used to preach that, if you can determine what is it in your life, specifically, that causes you to use, what feelings or what triggers or whatever you want to call them, cause you to immediately go for the drugs, if you can figure that out, you can get yourself straight. And I've contemplated and fought and beat that up for a long time. And I think I have a pretty good handle on on some of them, at least the ones in the forefront that would push me to go back. And that's how, and I utilize that to stay clean to this day. And that's how I've been able to get, you know, six years of no relapses and not going back. So, that's kind of my, my stick?

J

James Geering 2:01:33

Well, firstly, may thank you. I mean, this is this is the kind of courageous vulnerability that we need, there's going to be people from the outside looking in that know you as Timmy Gleason, the, the rescue, you know, Guru and you know, who was deployed on Task Force. To me, that's such a two dimensional look at our first responders, our Navy SEALs, you know, insert Alpha revered profession here. But behind the facade, you know, and it's all a facade behind behind the the front facing part of us is the human being inside the uniform. And the number of people I've heard that have had this kind of, you know, experience, and you talked about the perfect storm. So when you look back, you know, as, as you kind of touched on, very, very young, you know, single parent family at that point. So many people are like, Well, why wasn't I good enough for my father, my mother, why didn't they stay? Why was I adopted, whatever it is, and that's a very powerful emotion. Now you're six years old, on your own, there's that higher Maslow's hierarchy of needs security, how secure as a six year old really feel in a home on their own, you know, now fast forward to modern day firefighter. The term overtime whore is used a lot in fire service I used to, you know, be like, Why is money so fucking important to you, then you kind of get educated through a project like this, and you go, oh, when you're alone with your thoughts, you, they come back. But if you say, I'm just going to sign up for another 24, you don't have to think for that next 24 hour period. So I would argue that's probably a part of it, too. It's a trigger for the board and remembering as a kid, but also the accumulated trauma and even pre Haiti that was 15 years in the fire service, 15 years of shift work. 15 years of

accumulation, of course, on top of the childhood element. So now, you know, is it simply reminding you of the six year old or is it also, you don't want to be alone with your thoughts? And that's where, you know, the kind of dampening down with the opiate scam?



2:03:37

Yeah, yeah. Yeah, man, I mean, it. The one positive or a few positive things I have been able to get out of all of this is that I have been able to do exactly what you what you just described, I have been able to look at, you know, I know this is gonna sound stupid, but I look at the, the situation I'm being dealt with at the time, I kind of imagine that I'm holding it in my hand, and I'm looking at all aspects of it. And I see, well, when I look over here, it causes me to feel this way. When I look over here, it causes me to feel this way and and I'm able to kind of analyze, analyze my feelings that way. And that's one of the tools that they've given me. To help me process through through the addiction side of it is looking at those those different feelings and understanding why you're feeling them and then also allowing yourself moments and I don't mean when I say moments, I don't mean days. I mean moments. Allow yourself to feel them. Okay. I feel like I really want to bang a bunch of drugs right now. I want to shoot up, okay. You realize you want to shoot up? Take a second. Allow yourself to think about it. Feel it, but then think about what that is going to do. You're going to do that, let's say you go through with it, you're going to do that, then what? So now you find yourself looking at the denoise. And it's it's the step process that gets you through that, that the next thing you know, the the want to shoot up is no longer there. You've processed it through and you're moving on. And when I first started doing it, it would take some time, you know, I would feel it for a while, but now it's hardly ever comes. But when it does come, I allow myself the 30 seconds or 45 seconds to say, okay, Tim, you woke up this morning, you feel like you want to shoot want to shoot dope, or how great it would be to shoot dope right now. Let's, let's look at that for a second. And I take a second to look at and I go, you would become a stark raving fucking mess. Maniac if you even entertained doing that one time. And this is what would happen. So it doesn't take more than a minute or two to go. Alright, let's go. Let me just get on with my day. And the feeling's gone. You know, and that tool has helped me a lot. And it's, that's been given to me through, you know, some of the people I've been able to speak to, and it's helped. For me, it's helped. And the last thing that I truly feel that helped me get back on it was ultimately the last thing that I needed to get me back on, on the path of going back to the firehouse, because I went away, got a little bit of help. And then came back. And when I came back, they assigned me to a 40 hour week because that's that's the policy of my department, I was assigned to our logistics or logistics department, logistics division in our department, and I wasn't riding a fire truck I wasn't allowed to teach. I was basically folding T shirts and washing vans until the city psychologist signed off and said that I was capable of going back to the firehouse, but what do you think that was doing? To me? While I was washing vans and crews of people that I know, were passing by watching me wash these vans, I was becoming embarrassed. And it was starting to take me out rather than help me. So you know, I ended up sitting down with the Chief Fire Officer, my department. He's very smart, very smart individual. He He's also heavily involved in medical medical work outside of the department. He's a he's a cardiologist outside of the department. So he knows, you know, medical stuff in and out and sat down with him. And he said, Listen, what do you want to do? What what's your what's your endgame? What's your plan? Do you want to just continue to do dope for the rest of your life, or for the rest of your time on the job, because if you do, we'll figure something out. We'll keep you here in logistics, folding T shirts and washing vans, you will never get back on a fire truck, you will never teach again, you'll never do any of that. But you'll still be able to collect a paycheck. But then he said, however, I think you'll probably only last for about four or five more months

before you end up moving on, or we find you dead. Because if that's your game plan, that's fine, too. He said or do you? What do you want to do? Because, and I said, Well, ultimately I want to get back to the firehouse. And he said, Okay. And somehow he just figured out how I tick, you know, and he said, This is what I want you to do. He said, I want you to sit down tonight, I want you to go home tonight. And he goes, I want you to make a list from your least important to your most important. Come up with five or six things. And you know, the important things that you want back your most important halves. And he said if you're willing to follow what I'm going to project, he said, you will get back the things he said he said this is what we're going to do. He said we're going to you're going to go back into rehab. And I said no, forget it. I'm out. I'm not going back to rehab. I'm not going back into a facility and he doesn't let me finish because I didn't say you were gonna go back into a facility as you're going to sign yourself up for outpatient rehab because you're going to work here during the day, go home, go to outpatient rehab and then go home at night and report back to me in the morning because you're not going to be stuck in a facility so you're going to be going home at night those but you are going to go through another round of treatment. He said during that round of treatment. I hold the right to drug test you anytime I want as many times as I want here, plus you'll be drug tested in the treatment center. He said, if you're if you're clean for two weeks, I'll give you back your first. Your least one. What is that least once I said, I want to teach again, I want to get back to teaching. And he said, Okay, he goes as it as it happens, the department is sponsoring a vehicle extrication class, he said, if you can stay clean, starting tomorrow, for two weeks, you're clean and you and you complete all the assignments that the facility gives you. I'll put you in as an instructor in that class. So there was my first benchmark, or was able to hit that my second benchmark was, you know, I don't remember exactly what it was at the time, I was able to hit that and I kept every time I hit a benchmark, obviously, I, I felt confidence, you know, I felt I felt good about myself. So it pushed me to, to, to move forward, you know. And he figured out the type of the type of mentality I have, I always challenge myself, and I'm always very hard on myself to be a little bit better. So every time I got myself back one of those those, you know, wants, it made me want to push to the next one, and then push to the next one. And before you know it within two or three months, I was back to the firehouse. But had he not gotten involved? I can't say that I would have that I would have stayed clean. You know, I think I probably would have relapsed very early on. And I would have just, who knows what, because I was, I wasn't thriving, you know, I was I was reporting to work every day and Washington vans and not feeling any better about where I was in life. You know, I used to say to myself, pretty regular man, I gave up dope for this bullshit. At least with dope, I felt good. You know, I don't I don't have dope anymore. And now I'm fucking Washington vans, you know, as people are walking past me. So he was able to figure out for me what worked. And he put it to me. And you know, I credit him with a big aspect of getting the clean, you know, staying clean has been on me. But but getting getting helping getting me clean was a big he was a big part of. So that's ultimately what's helped me the most in, in my journey with this with this side of it, you know?

J

James Geering 2:12:39

Amazing. Well, when you think about it, too, it was your captain that caught you just in time for the suicide attempt, it was your chief, that was the right fit for you at that moment. And this is it, it's such a unique thing. We can't look at mental health as a one size fits all, everyone's going to be different, you know, EMDR might work for one person in a service dog might work for another. And even just to circle back, just touch on this as well. When you talked about your exposure to opiates, had you had a somewhat Disney life up to that point, and you'd been a thriving accountant. You may not have been addicted at all. And this is a big part of the drug

conversation. You look at Ohio, you look at West Virginia, there's a huge amount of industry that collapsed in those areas. And then there's a multi generational impact of poverty and some other areas, you know, mental health, depression. And so, you know, is it the drug? Yes. But is it also coupled with the mental health? Perfect Storm, as you said, you know, we're now that drug becomes an escape, and it could be alcoholism, it could be social media, overtime, you name it. But the moment that we just say, Oh, you just Dima ly demonize that drug or demonize addicts, which is even worse. Yeah, we're pigeonholing and rather than look at, you know, the human being and how did you get to that point, whether you're functioning firefighters hiding their alcoholism, or whether you're an opiate addict that's under a bridge shooting up, it's the same journey that we've been on? And the only answer is compassion, doesn't mean that you just let them walk all over you. But it's seeing them reaching out to lift them up, but then also, not blanketing with you know, as we talked about before, a call me for struggling or, you know, sending you off to a certain facility expecting you to be miraculously cured 30 days later. So I want to applaud both of the two men in this particular conversation that saw you and actually, you know, addressed the problem. I think it's beautiful and obviously I applaud you for the strength that you had to execute what needed to be done to get yourself out of your addiction.



2:14:46

Thank you. And you know, there were other there were others along the way that that contributed their piece to it, you know, that I I needed at the time. that I haven't mentioned here, but but I'm the captain and the chief for just to that, you know, they did they did play a significant role in keeping me here, you know, Captain most definitely because it started with him because had he not just figured it out, you know, I, we were we had a night the other night at the firehouse where we were kind of sitting out back, bullshitting, in the middle of the night, we had come back from Iran, and we both just kind of sat down, and we're talking about and I asked him, I said, What is it that that you keyed in on that? You knew, you know, what, how did you know? And he goes, Man, I can't, you know, I can't say anything specific. Other than I heard it in your voice. He goes, I heard that you just come to the end of your road, you know, and he goes, and I was worried and, and, you know, I acted on it. And, and he was right, you know, and it's funny, because he's a, he's a big guy. He's a jockey, kind of football, build kind of guy. And he goes, I remember telling the guy, because a couple of the younger members from my firehouse that I that I had kind of bonded with, came with him, you know. He said, I remember looking back at them and telling them, there's a very good chance when Tim opens the door, he's gonna punch me in the face. Just let it go. Don't don't intervene, let him Let him do whatever he's going to do, because he's going to be angry that we're here. And it's funny, because I remember looking and seeing them walk up the walkway to my front door. And I remember being like, raging pissed. And when I opened the door, you know, I pulled up in the door, along the lines of like, What the fuck are you guys doing here? Why are you here? You know, and nothing came out. Like I, I opened the door and just locked eyes with him. And I could see he was emotional. And then I immediately became emotional. And he said, Hey, listen, I don't know how I know. But I know it. I know what I know. And I'm, I know that you're planning something that is going to have very long lasting effects. And I want to get you some help before you do that. Will you come with me and let me get you some help. And as I said, I was standing there wanting to rip this guy's head off. And I'm not I'm not an imposing man at all. I wanted to rip this guy's head off, but I just looked at it and I put my head down. And I said, Yeah, I'm ready. You know, at that point, I was. At that point, I can honestly tell you James that I was as low as any my spirit was as low as any human being could be. I mean, I had no I was void of any feeling emotion. I had nothing left in the tank. Nothing. And surprisingly, I can be a

very stubborn bastard. But surprisingly, I didn't even argue I just said Alright, let's go, you know, and in a day or two, I was off to Maryland to go enter a facility. And, you know, had he not had the courage to to say no, I gotta do something about this. I probably wouldn't be here you know. And that's not to say I didn't have other friends in my life at the time that noticed that I was shitting the bed so to speak. Because a lot of a lot of people that I'm so close with did they knew I was in a bad spot. They knew I could no longer hide that I was an IV drug user anymore I mean, my arms were a mess my you know I had the the telltale pick marks you know, where you're picking out your skin from the opiates from the from the histamine histamine release of the opiates where I'd pick up my face or and pick up my arms. I mean, I looked like, like a druggie, I was down to about 120 pounds. I was pale like Dracula pale. Everybody knew I was sick, you know. But the problem the issue was they all knew I was sick. But they all knew my former character and my former character was he's going to pull out of the ship. This is Tim, Tim, you were talking about he? He's gonna get out of this. He he'll be fine is gonna pull it out. You know? And I was I had I had lost the ability to Pull it out, you know. So I credit him with a lot. And he didn't have to do what he did. And you know, to his credit, he did, and then I'm still here for it, you know, because of it, so I owe him a pretty big debt that I could probably never, never repay him fully. The only way that I can really repay him fully is by staying, you know, staying on the straight and narrow and on the clean side. And, you know, I've told the guys at my firehouse when I, when I went to go away, when I went away, for the first time, I stood them all in front of me, as the senior man and I, you know, I explained to them, they all knew, but I explained to them anyway, what was what was going on what had transpired, and that I was going to go away to get help. And that, you know, when I came back, and I was clean, I would stay clean, and I would use them as as a, as a means of staying clean, and they own a proportion of that to theirs. Ultimately, I'm selfish. In my clean time, I'm selfish, because I don't do it for nobody but myself. But there are people and aspects that own portions of it too. And they own the crew that I work with, currently at my firehouse, they're, they're a big part of my clean time, because I don't want to let them down and I don't want to be a burden to them. And I don't want them to have to bury me or or bury one of us, because I fucked up, you know, so I, I use them as inspiration to stay clean. They're one of many, but ultimately, as I said, I stay kind of selfish with it. And I don't do it for anybody else. But myself. That's the one thing where it's where it's really okay to be extremely selfish, is is clean. And so in sobriety, you know, do it for yourself, when nobody else

J James Geering 2:22:10

will, you said I don't want to be a burden to your crew. So you're gonna stay alive, that perfectly illustrates the difference between the broken mind that you are in, and the healthy mind that you are. Now, of course, we don't want to be a burden. Of course, we don't want our loved ones to find us, you know, after a suicide or an overdose. And this is a beautiful example of that. I think one of the things that needs to also be infused into the mental health conversation is that post traumatic growth, how once you've navigated that darkness, that becomes a strength now you know, and you can be a beacon of light for others. I just want to hit this before I let you go so I know we've gone past two hours but it's there's kind of an important value to this. Haiti was so traumatic and was a big trigger for you on this path. You come out the other side you have sobriety, but then we have Surfside, right on your doorstep now. So talk to me about that event. And talk to me about that strength now that you had to not allow that to make you spiral yet again.

So Surfside happens, we respond, you know, it's in our own backyard now. So it's, it's, it's even that much more. The difference. I think that well, this is the first starting point of the difference, if you follow me in the, in the path of suicide, the first piece of it is that I think we all pretty much knew as a rescuer, that we were going to a situation where there was not going to be anybody alive, you know. So we went there with the full potential of doing complete search and rescue doing what we had to do if the situation arose, but I think for the most part in our heads, at least, I can speak for mine in my head when I got there and saw the type of collapse it was and saw the the rubble pile and saw what was going on. I said, there's nobody that's going to be alive in this, you know, so you already begin to shift your, you know, your, your mindset of, alright, this is a recovery and, and you know, I can do this, you know, I'll tell you later, ultimately, what put the cap on it for me and made it a successful mission for me. But that gave me the opportunity in some way. Once I kind of changed my mind frame a little bit. It gave me the opportunity to look at it again, as I told you before, it's all kind of hold it in my hand and look at all aspects of it. And I was able to put kind of a different spin on it. I was able to say alright, as a as a as a leader on this team, what can I do using This, using this deployment I can, I can use it to teach my younger members how to look at collapse patterns, I can teach my younger members how to work alongside the cadaver dogs, I could teach my younger members, just how delicate you have to be when you dig out of body. So I went into a different mind frame, so to speak, you know, I went into, I went into a mind frame of we had a job to do, and the job was very, very important. But there was a nurturing kind of successful teaching side or showing side of things, too, you know. I was also able to spend a lot of time at night, talking with different members, the younger members that might have been having, having issues, we did have, you know, a situation that hit very close to home with suicide in that one of our firemen is child and ex wife lived in the apartment and were killed in the collapse. Our team, the gentleman, the guys that worked with him, we dug them out, we found them and ultimately dug them out and laid, help break them to help give them to him to lay to rest, you know, so we put some closure on it for him. The crews that were intimately involved with the dig out of those bodies, they had some hiccups along the way, I was able to put myself in a position where I could help them process some of those thoughts. So it became just kind of a different deployment for me, so to speak. Two things happened, that ultimately put the cap on it. For me, in making it more of a success than then, you know, a deployment that caused the issue. One of them was we're kind of winding down towards where it was getting kind of close to the end, where we were not going to be able to do much more for for the people here. I was standing we worked from our shift was from 12 Noon to 12 midnight, and then we were relieved by one of the other teams so I was standing about four o'clock in the afternoon in the middle of the shift I was standing on, you know the big mound of big rubble pile and looking out over this beautiful beach because the beach was 100 yards from from the row pile. You know, I'm looking at beautiful Miami Beach, beautiful ocean, palm trees, the wind is blowing. And I'm smelling you know, the smells of a rubble pile where a bunch of people have died and I'm looking at TVs and iPhones and jewelry and shoes and all this mountainous mounds of materialistic bullshit strewn all over for acres. I'm standing there and I'm looking at it. And I just had a moment where I said, kid you got to start living a better life because look, look at all this shit that we all struggle for that we you know, the iPhones and the computers and the cool sneakers and you know all the shit that we struggle for and, and buy need to have and work for and try to get. None of it means shit. Look, here it is dummy. Look at it. All these people are gone. None of this shit is gonna matter. It's gonna all get thrown in the garbage and all the people that own this stuff, they're all dead. Wake up. You got to have a different different perspective on life, man. So that was the first thing that kind of got me in I know it sounds a little kooky, but it got me in a different mindset. And then the last thing was, we finished, we finished operations at Surfside proper. However, there was another location that we were

taking, Not we but the that were that they were taking all of the building material and all you know, they would read, we would reduce the pile. At the Surfside location we'd look you know, as we were researching, that stuff would get taken to an off site location and dumped or or you know piled up again. I don't want to use the word dumped but it we get piled up again. Well, we went over there a group of us it was myself and for five or six other people, the rest of the team started breaking down equipment. And breaking up our camp there at Surfside. Well, we six or seven of us went over to this other location every day. And we would sift through the spoils to find secondary and tertiary remains, you know is just like doing a secondary or third or tertiary search on a house farm. We did the primary now we were coming back and doing the secondary. We knew that we were looking for remains of, of 96 people roughly as how many were were killed in the collapse, we knew we had found a bunch of people. But we hadn't got confirmation yet. Back from all of them from the from the county morgue. So we knew when we got over there, we were still looking for confirmation and remains of like 13 people. So our job was to go over there every day. And for 12 hours a day sift through stuff that we'd already gone through to look for tissue, hair, bone, any teeth, anything that we could, we could do a DNA test on. It was grueling, grueling, nasty, very hard work. However, I felt very honored that I was given the opportunity to, to do that. So the ones that went with me, they took it on, they took on the job also, at a very uplifting, you know, pace. They, they they were very honored to be there, too. So we decided all of us that we would not quit until we found all 13 people. And, you know, we would work for as long as we had to we kind of came together and made that pact well use are being what it is. After about four days of work. The bosses came out and said, Listen, you're done. Whether you find everybody or not, at the end today on Friday at the end of business, if you found them all great. If not, we're done. We're shut. We're shutting down and we're going home, we're done. There's nothing more we can do here. We begged and pleaded for more time, but they told us no, it is what it is. And at you know, six o'clock we're shutting down today.



2:32:42

So we searched and searched and searched. And within the last 20 minutes of being there for the day, there was we knew we were missing still one person we had, we were missing the remains of one person that we hadn't found anything for them. There was a female. And there was one section of the pile that I wanted to go through just one more time because for some for some reason, I just was getting a feeling in that area. Like there's, there's there's gotta be something still here that we're missing. So I grabbed the one of the guys that I'm very close to he's a fireman at my firehouse and I said, Listen, we only got about 10 minutes left, they're gonna pull the plug on this and let's be you run over here real quick. Climb up on this pile and dig around and see what we can find this I just got a feeling. His name is David. I said, Dave, come with me. I just got a feeling. And we ran over there while the while the group was cleaning up all our tools and stuff like that and we climb up on the pile. I tell him I go Why don't you start over in this area. I'm going to start over this area. And we started digging within 45 seconds to a minute David uncovered a full lower mandible, like the lower jaw bone with the teeth still intact. But it was just the lower the lower jaw and it still had some tissue on it. And you know it was for that for what it was it was a huge score. You know, it was something to be very excited about. So we bagged it. We you know, we took it over to to the forensic people. And then we were called off we were told when you're done start cleaning up, we're going home when we were pulled off the pile. We went home the next morning and four o'clock in the afternoon. The next day we got confirmation that that jawbone that we found was was the last was the last female that we were looking for. So we found maybe not hold but we found remnants of all 90 plus people that were missing in that building. We were able to bring closure

to their families by finding every one of them. So that finishing on that, on that helped me tremendously. Because I can tell you in the past, finishing on a downturn on a deployment has not done good for me in the past. But this, this helped me process a lot of what we saw and what we did over there as a complete win, you know? So those two events, I think, what, what made this deployment completely different than, than other deployments. So that's what I've been able to put together. From from certain. So it ended as positively as it could end. For those poor people, it ended because we were able to bring all of them home, you know,

 James Geering 2:36:05

what I'm so glad I asked that question. I mean, that again, you know, carries us through to modern day and you wouldn't have been able to be there, you wouldn't be able to have the desire to do the things that you did on that pile, even though it was a recovery had you been, you know, in the state six years prior. So for people listening, that you talked about your phone number, let's just do the social media side. So if they want to reach out to you if they want to learn more about where you're teaching, or where they want to contact for a personal reason, where is the best place online,

 2:36:38

I'm on Instagram, and I'm on Facebook. And I check both of those regularly, you put in my name, Timothy Gleason, and I should I should pop up. I'm also a full time instructor for national rescue consultants and RC, you can find me you can find me there as well.

 James Geering 2:36:56

Let's say me, I want to say thank you. I mean, like I said, we could have talked rescue for two and a half hours. And that would have been a fascinating conversation. We didn't even touch on Katrina, for example. However, there's so much importance to hearing these stories from people that are revered in our associated professions. But when they hear the vulnerability, to me, it dismantles that myth that we were raised on him and we're racing at the same age. So this kind of facade of masculinity that you know, men don't cry, rub some dirt and it bullshit. The story, you know, the the journey that you've been through the highs and the lows from the rescuer standpoint and the human standpoint, I think are gonna resonate so deeply. So when you talked about honoring the gesture or the life saving event that your captain initiated, I think this is one of the reasons that you do pay it back through your teaching through your service continuously as a firefighter, but also through podcasts, you know, like call is, and this one way, you're reaching out to people that are struggling, that feel that they're alone feel that they're being a pussy, when the reality is that I would argue almost everyone has a degree of suffering at one point or another. So I want to thank you so so much number on my heart, for being basically so courageous with this interview and telling your story today.

 2:38:16

Well, I appreciate it. I appreciate the opportunity. I've had a great time. Really, it's been easy to do with you as a host. So thank you for that. And by all means, if if anybody, please, if anybody reaches out to you through the show that that would like to talk but they just don't know how

reaches out to you through the show and that would like to talk, but they just don't know how to go about it. Please give them my information. I'd be more than willing to talk to anybody that is suffering or that perceives themselves to maybe have any type of problem. I can't say that I'll be able to solve it for you, but I'll help and I'll try to get you the help that you need. Also, James if you ever need anything as far as the show goes, please, by all means, reach out and I hope that we are able to stay together and stay in communication together as friends.